DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 301 TM 033 160

AUTHOR Yuan, Xiujuan Susan; Pernici, Sam C.; Franklin, Bobby J.
TITLE Grade Level Retention Rates in Louisiana Public Schools: 1997-98 to 2000-01.
INSTITUTION Louisiana State Dept. of Education, Baton Rouge.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; *Educational Trends; Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; *Grade Repetition; *Public Schools; Secondary School Students; Socioeconomic Status; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS *Louisiana

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the number and percentage of students repeating grades in Louisiana public schools in the years of 1997-1998 to 2000-2001. The findings are grouped by grade, economic status, education classification, gender, and ethnicity. Grade retention trends and the impact of high stakes testing policy on student retention are discussed. Data were obtained from Louisiana's statewide student enrollment database Student Information System. From 1997-1998 to 1999-2000, K-12 retention rates in Louisiana public schools rose from 7.5% (53,358) to 8.3% (57,361). The rate climbed to 10.7% (73,740) in 2000-2001 when the LEAP 21 test became a promotional standard for fourth and eighth graders. In 2000-2001, the number of students retained more than tripled in grades 4 and 8. In 1999-2000, grade 9 students were retained at the highest rate, followed by grades 1, 7, and 10. Poverty was strongly associated with grade retention, and students in special education programs were retained at a higher rate than students in a regular education program. Special education students receiving free lunch were most likely to be retained. African American students were retained at a higher rate than students in other ethnic groups, and male students were more likely to be retained than female students. (SLD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

TM

ED 455 301

Grade Level Retention Rates in Louisiana Public Schools: 1997-98 To 2000-01

Xiujuan (Susan) Yuan
Sam C. Pernici
Bobby J. Franklin

Louisiana Department of Education

TM033160

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

X. Yuan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

This study reports the number and percentage of students repeating grades in Louisiana public schools in the years of 1997-98 to 2000-01. The findings are grouped by grade, economic status, education classification, gender, and ethnicity. Grade retention trend and the impact of high stakes testing policy on student retention were discussed.

Data for this report were obtained from the statewide student enrollment database SIS (Student Information System). Grade retention was determined by comparing student grade placement of the year to the previous year. Retention rate is the total number of students retained as the percentage of the total number of students enrolled in both the school year and the previous year or graduated from the previous year.

The major findings are:

- From 1997-98 to 1990-00, K-12 retention rates in Louisiana public schools rose from 7.5% (53,358) to 8.3% (57,361). The rate climbed to 10.7% (73,740) in 2000-01 when the LEAP 21 test was used as a promotional standard for 4th and 8th grade students.

- In 2000-01, the number of students retained more than tripled in 4th grade (9,511, 17.1%) and 8th grade (10,856, 20.7%) as compared to the previous year. These sharp increases in retention rates reflect the impact of the high stakes testing policy on 4th and 8th grade students.

- In 1999-00, grade 9 students were retained at the highest rate (15.7%), followed by grade 1 (12.6 %), grade 7 (10.9%), and grade 10 (9.7%) The retention rates in these grades changed after the implementation of the high stakes testing policy. The 2000-01 data reveals that grade 8 (20.7%), grade 4 (17.1%), grade 9 (15.3%), and grade 1 (13.2%) had the highest retention rates.

- Poverty is strongly associated with grade retention. Students receiving free lunch are almost twice as likely to be retained as students receiving reduced-price lunch or students not receiving any food services.

- Students in special education programs were retained at a higher rate than students in a regular education program. Special education students receiving free lunch are most likely to be retained (17.5%) in 2000-01.

- African American students were retained at a higher rate than students in other ethnic groups. Interestingly, Black students receiving reduced-price lunch had significantly lower retention rates than those on free lunch or those not receiving any food services in 2000-01.

- Male students are more likely to be retained than female students.

Introduction

Grade retention is an interesting educational issue. Over the last century, grade retention has acted like a pendulum swinging back and forth with each educational reform movement. Each time there was a call for higher student achievement, grade retention rates went up. With the most recent student and school accountability initiatives, grade retention enters another swing.

In his 1999 State of the Union address, former President Clinton proposed 'ending social promotion' and greater expectation to student performance. So far, seven states including Louisiana have adopted high stakes testing policies, which use test score as standards to track, promote, and graduate students. Starting 1999-00, Louisiana public school students in fourth and eighth grades need to get passing scores on a state-wide test (LEAP for the 21st Century :LEAP21) to be promoted.

The impact of the high stakes testing policy on retention in grades 4 and 8, as well as other grades needs to be assessed. To inform the public, educators and policy makers on the magnitude of student retention in the state and assess the effects of the high-stakes testing policy, the Louisiana Department of Education conducted its first retention study. In using data collected through the Student Information System (SIS), this study established four years of retention rates from 1997-98 to 2000-01 for students enrolled in grades K-12 in Louisiana public schools.

This paper reports the methodology and findings of this study. The number and percentage of students retained in the state in the years from 1997-98 to 2000-01 are presented. The retention rates were analyzed by grade, economic status, education classification, gender, and ethnicity. Retention trend in the years of prior to (from 1997-98 to 1999-00) and after (2000-01) the implementation of the high-stakes testing policy was discussed.

Methodology

In this study, grade-level retention was defined as a student repeating a grade from one year to the next. The data sources for this study are five years of student enrollment records collected through the Student Information System (SIS) from 1996-97 to 2000-01. The grade displayed in the last or the most recent enrollment entry record in the previous year was used to match the grade placement as displayed in the first entry record in the year of study. Students who had the same grade placement in two consecutive years were determined as retained.

Retention rate was calculated by dividing the total number of students retained by the total number of students included in the study, then multiplied by 100. The numerator, total number of students retained, included students enrolled in the previous year and repeated grade in the year of study in Louisiana public schools. The denominator included students who enrolled in grades K-12 in Louisiana public schools in the previous year, and continued to enroll as a graded student in the following school year or graduated in the previous school year.

Students who enrolled in grades other than K-12 in the previous year, and those who dropped out or left to transfer out-of-state, attend private school or home schools were not included in this study.

Findings

Trends in Grade Retention

Over the three years from 1997-98 to 1999-00, retention rates in Louisiana public schools increased from 7.5% (53,358) to 8.3% (57,361) in 1999-00. With the adoption of the LEAP 21 test as a statewide promotional standard, the percentage of students retained climbed to 10.7% (73,740) in 2000-01. As shown in Table 1, approximately one out of 10 students enrolled in grades K-12 in Louisiana public schools in 1999-00 was retained in 2000-01. Over 20,000 more students were retained in 2000-01 compared to four years ago in 1997-98.

Insert Table 1 about here

Retention by Grade

Retention rates vary greatly between grades. Figure 1 displays the percentage of students retained in each grade over the four years from 1997-98 to 2000-01. A consistent grade retention pattern was shown in the three years prior to the use of the high stakes testing standards. Students in 9th grade retained at the highest rate (average about 16.4%). Grades Kindergarten, 1st, 7th, and 10th also have relatively high retention rates. On the other hand, fourth and eighth grades retained relatively lower percentage of students in the three years, with an average of 5.0% in 4th grade and 6% in 8th grade.

However, the retention pattern changed in 2000-01. The percentages of students retained in 4th and 8th grades were more than three times higher than they were in the previous years. As shown in Table 1, a total of 9,511 (17.1%) 4th graders and 10,856 (20.7%) of 8th graders were repeating grades in 2000-01. Comparing to 1997-98, over 7,000 more students retained in both 4th and 8th grades. In addition, there was an increase in the proportion of students retained in all other K-8 grades, but at a lesser degree. Grades of 9, 1, and 7 continued to have relatively higher retention rates.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Grade Retention By Economic Standing

Poverty has a strong association with grade retention. Economically disadvantaged students have higher retention rates than students who are not economically disadvantaged. As seen in Table 2, students receiving free-price lunch were almost twice as likely to be retained than those receiving reduced-price lunch or not receiving any food support. Students with free lunch were retained at a rate average about 10.2% over the three years from 1997-98 to 1999-00, in comparison to 6% for those on reduced-price lunch and 6.1% for those not receiving any food subsidizes. Interestingly, even though students receiving reduced-price lunch have lower family income than students not receiving any food services, there was no noticeable differences in the retention rates between the two groups of students.

Insert Table 2 about here

Grade Retention By Education Classification

The proportion of students retained also differs between educational programs. Students in special education programs were retained at a higher rate than those in regular education programs. Table 3 shows that special education students were retained at a rate of 11.2% in 1999-00 and 15.6% in 2000-01, while regular education students were retained at 8.1% and 10.5% in the two years. Very low percentage of students participating gifted or talented programs were retained.

Insert Table 3 about here

Grade Retention By Gender

Gender differences in grade retention are apparent as shown in Table 4. Male students were more likely to be retained than female students. As a four-year average in all grades, one out of 10 (10.4%) males was retained, in comparison to a retention rate of 6.9% among female students. Similar gender gap was also found among 4^{th} and 8^{th} grades, however, the gap is very small among the 8^{th} graders (less than 1.0%)

Insert Table 4 about here

Grade Retention By Ethnicity

Retention rates vary among students with different ethnic backgrounds. Black students had higher retention rates than other ethnic students. On average, Black students were retained at 11.4% across the four years, while White students were retained at 6.2%. The high stakes testing policy also has a greater impact on Blacks than on other ethnic groups. As displayed in Table 5 and 6, Black students had a greater increase in the percentage of students retained (20% in 4th grade and 25% in 8th grade) from 1999-00 to 2000-01. Three times more Black 4th graders and four times more 8th Black graders were retained in 2000-01. In addition, Hispanic and American Indian students also had relatively higher retention rates than White and Asian students.

Insert Table 5 and 6 about here

Conclusions

Grade retention rates are on a rise in Louisiana public schools. The number of students retained has increased from 53,358 (7.5%) in 1997-98 to 73,740 (10.7%) in 2000-01. Over 20,000 more students were retained in 2000-01 than three years ago in 1997-98. The high stakes testing policy had a big impact on the number and percentage of students retained in the state, especially 4th and 8th grades. Retention rates in both grades have more than tripled in 2000-01 than the previous year. In 2000-01, nearly one out of 5 students enrolled in 4th or 8th grades in 1999-00 is repeating grades this year.

Prior to the use of high stakes testing standards, ninth grade had the highest percentage of students retained among all grades. First and tenth grades also had relatively higher retention rates. Grade retention is related to certain student characteristics. Students who are economically disadvantaged are twice as likely to be retained. Special education students are more likely to be retained than regular education students. Male students are retained at higher percentages than female students. Ethnic minority students especially Black students are more likely to be retained.

The sharp increases in the number and percentage of students retained in 4th and 8th grades may suggest that the promotional standards used in the past are lower than the testing standards adopted in 1999-00. Future findings in grade retention rates in the next few years will serve as a good indicator to assess the accountability system and educational programs implemented in the state.

Table 1. 1997-98 To 2000-01 K-12 Grade-Level Retention Rates In Louisiana Public Schools

		K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	State
	Total Students	59,474	61,958	57,141	56,339	56,986	57,564	58,375	57,567	54,177	59,684	48,323	41,115	38,819	707,522
1997-98	Total Retained	5,169	6,945	3,172	2,541	2,461	1,962	3,398	5,297	3,158	9,889	5,084	2,599	1,683	53,358
	Retention Rate	8.7%	11.2%	5.6%	4.5%	4.3%	3.4%	5.8%	9.2%	5.8%	16.6%	10.5%	6.3%	4.3%	7.5%
	Total Students	58,923	61,570	57,808	56,236	55,693	55,392	57,889	58,970	53,328	58,867	49,265	41,104	39,975	705,020
1998-99	Total Retained	5,039	6,967	3,518	2,777	2,790	2,477	4,233	5,961	3,402	9,933	4,879	2,342	1,826	56,144
	Retention Rate	8.6%	11.3%	6.1%	4.9%	5.0%	4.5%	7.3%	10.1%	6.4%	16.9%	9.9%	5.7%	4.6%	8.0%
	Total Students	57,191	60,682	57,367	56,416	55,214	54,003	55,612	57,697	53,273	57,208	47,614	41,467	39,340	693,084
1999-00	Total Retained	5,212	7,673	3,724	3,287	3,005	2,469	4,543	6,280	3,280	9,026	4,649	2,574	1,639	57,361
	Retention Rate	9.1%	12.6%	6.5%	5.8%	5.4%	4.6%	8.2%	10.9%	6.1%	15.7%	9.7%	6.2%	4.1%	8.3%
	Total Students	55,056	60,434	56,524	56,636	55,468	54,168	55,445	56,246	52,467	57,027	47,316	40,755	39,726	687,268
2000-01	Total Retained	5,286	7,981	3,810	3,998	9,511	2,983	5,070	6,923	10,856	8,719	4,345	2,437	1,821	73,740
	Retention Rate	9.6%	13.2%	6.7%	7.1%	17.1%	5.5%	9.1%	12.3%	20.7%	15.3%	9.2%	6.0%	4.6%	10.7%

Table 2. K-12 Grade-Level Retention Rates By Economic Status

	1997-98			1998-99			1999-00			2000-01		
	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate
On Free Lunch	303,446	28,075	9.3%	349,448	36,360	10.4%	338,350	36,966	10.9%	337,530	49,620	14.7%
On Reduced Lunch	44,943	2,275	5.1%	54,603	3,050	5.6%	55,172	3,189	5.8%	53,770	4,006	7.5%
Not On Free/Reduced Lunch	359,133	23,008	6.4%	300,969	16,734	5.6%	299,562	17,206	5.7%	295,968	20,114	6.8%
Total	707,522	53,358	7.5%	705,020	56,144	8.0%	693,084	57,361	8.3%	687,268	73,740	10.7%

Table 3. K-12 Grade-Level Retention Rates By Education Classification

	1999-00			2000-01		
	Total Students[1]	Number Retained[2]	Retention Rate[3]	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate
Special Education	73,451	8,261	11.2%	75,502	11,752	15.6%
Gifted/Talented	18,282	230	1.3%	23,836	378	1.6%
Regular Education	601,351	48,870	8.1%	587,930	61,610	10.5%
Total	693,084	57,361	8.3%	687,268	73,740	10.7%

Table 4. K-12 Grade-Level Retention Rates By Gender And Ethnicity

	1997-98			1998-99			1999-00			2000-01		
	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate
Female	350,376	20,370	5.8%	348,867	21,515	6.2%	343,178	22,388	6.5%	339,136	30,167	8.9%
Male	357,146	32,988	9.2%	356,153	34,629	9.7%	349,906	34,973	10.0%	348,132	43,573	12.5%
American Indian	4,065	340	8.4%	4,176	302	7.2%	4,108	325	7.9%	4,145	373	9.0%
Asian	9,151	323	3.5%	9,008	367	4.1%	8,899	336	3.8%	8,465	404	4.8%
Black	322,505	30,302	9.4%	324,662	33,650	10.4%	322,803	34,862	10.8%	323,406	48,249	14.9%
Hispanic	8,267	667	8.1%	8,603	752	8.7%	8,753	742	8.5%	9,060	967	10.7%
White	363,534	21,726	6.0%	358,571	21,073	5.9%	348,521	21,096	6.1%	342,192	23,747	6.9%
Total	707,522	53,358	7.5%	705,020	56,144	8.0%	693,084	57,361	8.3%	687,268	73,740	10.7%

Table 5. Grade Retention Rates In 4th Grade By Gender And Ethnicity

	1997-98			1998-99			1999-00			2000-01		
	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate
Female	27,811	932	3.4%	27,411	1,064	3.9%	27,130	1,179	4.3%	27,128	4,255	15.7%
Male	29,175	1,529	5.2%	28,282	1,726	6.1%	28,084	1,826	6.5%	28,340	5,256	18.5%
American Indian	368	14	3.8%	330	19	5.8%	380	8	2.1%	321	52	16.2%
Asian	720	18	2.5%	722	21	2.9%	682	16	2.3%	638	44	6.9%
Black	26,659	1,505	5.6%	26,262	1,841	7.0%	26,219	1,905	7.3%	26,419	7,243	27.4%
Hispanic	671	18	2.7%	708	35	4.9%	677	35	5.2%	738	98	13.3%
White	28,568	906	3.2%	27,671	874	3.2%	27,256	1,041	3.8%	27,352	2,074	7.6%
Total	56,986	2,461	4.3%	55,693	2,790	5.0%	55,214	3,005	5.4%	55,468	9,511	17.1%

Table 6. Grade Retention Rates In 8th Grade By Gender And Ethnicity

	1997-98			1998-99			1999-00			2000-01		
	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate	Total Students	Number Retained	Retention Rate
Female	26,848	1,156	4.3%	26,491	1,274	4.8%	26,833	1,299	4.8%	26,183	5,306	20.3%
Male	27,329	2,002	7.3%	26,837	2,128	7.9%	26,440	1,981	7.5%	26,284	5,550	21.1%
American Indian	317	20	6.3%	334	17	5.1%	336	17	5.1%	323	49	15.2%
Asian	732	25	3.4%	675	25	3.7%	717	22	3.1%	671	79	11.8%
Black	23,862	1,703	7.1%	23,942	1,878	7.8%	24,173	1,947	8.1%	24,060	8,059	33.5%
Hispanic	571	32	5.6%	585	58	9.9%	624	52	8.3%	656	107	16.3%
White	28,695	1,378	4.8%	27,792	1,424	5.1%	27,423	1,242	4.5%	26,757	2,562	9.6%
Total	54,177	3,158	5.8%	53,328	3,402	6.4%	53,273	3,280	6.1%	52,467	10,856	20.7%

Figure 1. Retention Rates By Grade